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Charleston Gazette

Tomblin directs state to conduct home water testing

By Ken Ward Jr.

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Two hours after dismissing the idea at a high-profile news conference, Tomblin administration officials said Wednesday they would come up with a testing plan to see if Crude MCHM from the Jan. 9 Elk River leak is still inside home plumbing systems in West Virginia.

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin directed the multi-agency team handling the state's leak response to come up with a plan for testing a representative sample of homes, said Amy Goodwin, the governor's communications director.

"This is something that we have discussed and will continue to discuss and work through best practices in developing a plan of action," Goodwin said.

The announcement followed an afternoon news conference the Governor's Office staged to try to quell growing public concern about the water supply and the long-term impact of the leak.

In the reception area just outside Tomblin's Capitol office, officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention crowded around a podium with a large contingent of state government representatives.

The event came just two days after residents at a legislative public hearing repeatedly complained about the Tomblin administration's handling of the crisis that followed the chemical leak that contaminated the drinking water for 300,000 West Virginians.

"I am frustrated and angry," the governor told reporters and television cameras. "I share your concerns about the water crisis. I heard you, and I am listening."

Tomblin dismissed questions about any plans for home testing of tap water, saying there was no way the state or federal government could do such sampling in all 100,000 homes and businesses impacted by the leak.

Asked why the state doesn't instead do a study that examines a smaller, but representative sample of how MCHM is reacting with home plumbing systems, the governor would say only, "That's one of those things we can look at doing."

Tomblin's comments on home testing echoed statements made Tuesday by EPA and CDC officials in interviews with the Gazette, that the state had no plans for home testing, and the federal government had decided not to press the Tomblin administration on the matter.

During the news conference, though, EPA and CDC officials had trouble answering when asked if testing of home tap water would provide them valuable data in understanding the potential long-term impact of the Freedom Industries' leak.

Dr. Tanja Popovic, director of the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health, said all home plumbing systems are different and that materials sometimes stop in them and sometimes move inside them.

That's exactly the argument that Andrew Whelton, a University of South Alabama environmental engineer who has been testing West Virginia water systems, had made in urging the government to test inside homes in the leak-impact area.

Popovic said a study of the sort Whelton has called for is not a bad idea but that officials would need to consider how many homes could be tested, and ensure it's a large enough sample to produce a reliable result.

Shawn Garvin, the regional EPA administrator, said his agency was comfortable with the state's

initial decision not to test home water supplies, but he did not dispute that such testing would provide helpful information.

"We feel that the protocols that they have in place are appropriate," Garvin said after the news conference, "but if the state decides to do that, we would be supportive."

Garvin and Popovic made the federal government's first high-profile appearance in West Virginia since the Elk River chemical leak, joining with a governor who has been harshly critical of the Obama administration's environmental policies.

Earlier in the week, Tomblin administration officials and other state leaders had been trying to turn public discussions toward what they said were slow responses and lack of help from the CDC and the EPA. On Wednesday, though, the governor started the news conference by praising the federal agencies for their assistance.

The leak at Freedom Industries sent an estimated 10,000 gallons of the coal-cleaning chemical Crude MCHM and other substances into the Elk River, prompting a "do not use" order for Charleston and parts of eight surrounding counties. At least 500 people have sought medical attention at area hospitals and, despite assurances from West Virginia American Water and the government, many residents continue to use only bottled water.

Popovic used part of Wednesday's news conference to defend her agency's development of an emergency "screening level" of 1 part per million for MCHM.

CDC officials, she said, applied three levels of "uncertainty factors" to take into account their use of a laboratory rat test, potential impacts to sensitive populations and a troubling lack of data on the chemical.

"The question that keeps coming up -- is your water safe? -- with all of the science, everything that we have . . . so far, I can say that you can use your water however you like," Popovic said.

Outside public-health experts, though, have questioned whether the CDC had anywhere near enough data to draw any reliable conclusions and if agency officials properly considered impacts on sensitive populations and great unknowns about the industry-produced data they did have on MCHM.

In recent days, West Virginia residents have increasingly been asking why the state Department of Health and Human Resources or the National Guard are testing water for MCHM only at the water treatment plant, at fire hydrants and in some public buildings, such as schools.

Outside experts have expressed concern that the MCHM and other chemicals from the leak could have been absorbed by home plumbing systems, where it could continue to leach into water -- even if in very small amounts -- for some undetermined amount of time.

Whelton, the Alabama engineer, has been testing water from area homes and arguing publicly that more information is needed about how chemicals from the leak interact with varying types

of home pipes and tanks.

In an email interview Tuesday night, Whelton had said officials were making a mistake if they didn't conduct a broader study of MCHM's presence in homes impacted by the leak.

"Chemical exposures occur inside homes at kitchen faucets, showers, etc., not at a hydrant," Whelton said. "Plumbing systems do not operate the same as buried pipe networks. There are clear differences."

Last week, Whelton was awarded a \$50,000 emergency grant from the National Science Foundation to study the way the MCHM from the leak acts when it enters home plumbing systems.

In announcing the grant, an NSF official called the Elk River leak "one of the largest human-made environmental disasters in this century." The foundation said one of the central unknowns about the leak's long-term impacts is how the chemicals interact with home plumbing systems.

At a U.S. Senate hearing Tuesday, an official from the Natural Resources Defense Council noted Whelton's research but said the grant provides "insufficient resources to conduct an extensive testing regime representative of the 300,000 customers affected."

During an interview Tuesday, Larry Cseh, an emergency response coordinator with the CDC and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, said any decision for the federal government to test for MCHM testing in homes would be up to the EPA.

In another interview Tuesday, EPA regional water-protection chief Jon Capacasa initially said he was under the impression that tap water was being tested inside homes.

"My understanding is that a lot of different types of monitoring and testing have been done in the schools, at the taps, in homes, and in distribution systems and finished water leaving the plant," Capacasa said. "We're encouraged by the fact that it shows diminished presence of these chemicals in the water, if not non-detect."

Told that neither the state nor the water company had been testing inside homes, Capacasa responded, "I can't speak definitely to it, but I'm aware of the school sampling, which I think was taps. I know all of the sample results have been published online for review. I'm encouraged by that."

Asked for specifics of the home testing he referred to, Capacasa finally said, "You bring up a good point. Let me do my homework on that before I comment. If that's a concern, we certainly will track that down and make sure we are getting the best information possible."

Several hours later, EPA spokeswoman Bonnie Smith said in an email to the Gazette, "Our drinking water program confirmed with WV Bureau of Public Health and WV American Water that none of the distribution system sampling was done in homes."

"Samples were collected at hydrants and other locations, where samplers could access water representative of particular pressure zones," Smith said. "These samples reflected water quality in the water mains, which is water that would be delivered to homes/buildings/etc."

Smith added, "[The] EPA has reviewed the home flushing protocol that the water company has developed, and believes that if properly implemented by homeowners, the flushing should result in water quality which is representative of what is being delivered to the homes."

Asked to comment on the EPA's statement, Whelton said, "To my knowledge, [the] EPA has not provided any field data to justify their conclusions. It is possible that [the] EPA is simply traveling in [to West Virginia] to reaffirm their position without conducting any unbiased testing to test their assumption."

"It is baffling why any official would make those statements without hard data, which they could have collected already," Whelton said.

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Charleston Daily Mail

Tomblin, other officials discuss leak response moving forward

by Dave Boucher

Daily Mail Capitol Bureau Chief

Joined by a host of local, state and federal officials, Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin said the government hasn't forgotten about the Elk River chemical spill.

"It will be a month tomorrow when this chemical spill happened," Tomblin said Wednesday during a press conference. "We will not lose sight of our goal of keeping your water safe."

During the press conference, the governor's first in two weeks, Tomblin said officials will continue to be vigilant.

He said testing at the water plant will continue "for the foreseeable future" and that state officials would oversee the changing of filters at the West Virginia American Water Plant, a process the company has said will take some time.

On Jan. 9, officials discovered thousands of gallons of crude MCHM and PPH leaking from a hole in a storage tank owned by Freedom Industries. At least 10,000 gallons is believed to have escaped the container, an unknown amount of which made it into the Elk River.

Shortly thereafter, the chemicals overwhelmed the filtration system at the water treatment facility about 1.5 miles downstream from the spill.

Officials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency spoke Wednesday, the first time they've joined the governor during a press conference.

Dr. Tanja Popovic, acting director of the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health, briefly described the CDC's involvement in helping state officials.

She said people could drink the water, bathe in it and use it however they like.

That doesn't mean it's safe, a word that's apparently not in the CDC's vocabulary.

"We're not really talking about if the water is safe, we're talking about is the water appropriate for use, given the information we know about MCHM," Popovic said after the press conference.

"We do not use the term safe . . . because that does not well describe what we can do with the information that we have," she said.

The CDC created the line for how much crude MCHM could likely be in the water and not cause adverse health affects. That 1-part-per-million level was crafted using the information available, Popovic said.

She said the procedure relied heavily on the fact that little is known about the chemical and therefore extra caution is needed.

She added an "interagency team" with officials from several federal agencies who have a combined 200 years in toxicological experienced concurred with the CDC level.

The CDC is not ready to say if symptoms reported by hundreds of people after the spill are in fact connected to the spill, Popovic said. She then said, based in part on the severity of those symptoms, it's "unlikely" the chemical will cause long-term adverse health affects.

Her answers seemed to vary some after the press conference.

The CDC told pregnant women not to drink the water with any amount of crude MCHM almost a week after it said water with less than 1 part per million of the chemical was likely safe.

Popovic didn't give a straight answer as to whether pregnant women should drink it.

"I think that the pregnant women need to address the issue of water just like they address anything else: They may not want to eat certain food, they may not want to fly. It doesn't mean that flying isn't safe, but they want to take precautions that make them feel good."

EPA Administrator Shawn Garvin and Bill Arguto, the EPA's chief of the region's "drinking water branch" also spoke.

EPA officials have been in West Virginia almost since the day the spill was discovered, Garvin said, but have provided little information because the state is in charge.

While the EPA has commented in response to some media requests, he said it tries to let the state spearhead communications.

"When we don't have the lead, we work with those on the ground who have the lead for the messaging," he said.

As many others at the state and federal level continue to repeat, Garvin said smelly water doesn't necessarily mean unsafe water.

The first CDC team didn't arrive in West Virginia until Jan. 16, according to a statement by a CDC spokeswoman. However, Popovic and state officials said they were in contact via phone and email.

There needs to be some surveillance of the local community to see if more people report symptoms or other health problems moving forward, Garvin said. She was quick to emphasize that doesn't mean creating a monitoring system, necessarily.

The CDC team that came Jan. 16 and left Friday conducted its own review of available patient data, and will provide local health officials with the final report when it's ready, Popovic said.

Garvin said an EPA drinking water expert would remain here to work with state health officials. They'll also continue to help the state Department of Environmental Protection at the site of the spill and the other agencies involved in testing.

That wasn't the focus of Wednesday's meeting, though.

Both Dr. Letitia Tierney, state health officer and commissioner of the Bureau for Public Health, and DEP Secretary Randy Huffman described it as a chance to put names to faces.

"Nothing special happened today, other than (Garvin) personally showed up, that was the only thing that was different today," Huffman said.

Tierney said the conversation was beneficial in that the officials confirmed ideas she suspected to be true.

Tierney and other state officials emphasized they are relying on the expertise of people working at the federal level.

"I have confidence in these people," Tierney said, referencing all government workers involved.

"They've dedicated their life to not having fame or fortune, but to the betterment of the human kind. If I can't trust them, I can't trust anybody."

Washington Post

From Alaska to Florida, 21 attorneys general join fight to halt Chesapeake Bay cleanup

By Darryl Fears, Published: February 5

Attorneys general in 21 states are backing an attempt to derail the Obama administration's Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan, fearing that the government will use that authority to regulate wastewater in other watersheds, including the Mississippi River Basin.

State attorneys general, most of them Republicans, from as far as Alaska and Montana joined the American Farm Bureau Federation in its fight to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from carrying out its plan to clean up the nation's largest estuary. Impaired waters have led to fish-killing dead zones and other marine life die-offs for decades.

"If this [cleanup] is left to stand," they argued in their joint amicus brief filed this week in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit, "other watersheds, including the Mississippi River Basin, could be next."

Although farm and industrial pollution in the Mississippi River causes an immense Gulf of Mexico dead zone that kills marine life, the EPA has said it has no interest in orchestrating a cleanup plan that states in the region haven't requested and aren't prepared to develop, unlike the Chesapeake Bay region.

The EPA recently challenged and lost a federal suit filed by environmental groups that called on it to end its "hands-off approach" to managing the Mississippi River and to develop a measuring stick for the level of pollution that could be allowed to enter the river.

In a statement about the brief, the attorneys general described it as a bipartisan agreement, although it includes only three Democrats. The 21 states were described as geographically varied, but they were solid in their opposition to President Obama in the 2012 election, with the president taking only Michigan and Florida.

The other states are Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Their action drew a sharp response from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which sued the EPA to initiate the cleanup plan. “We say to . . . [the 21] states, don’t tell us how to restore clean water in our backyard,” said its president, Will Baker. “Together, we are well on our way to making our rivers and streams safer, improving habitat, protecting human health, and strengthening local economies.”

Obama issued an executive order to restore the Chesapeake’s health in May 2009. The next year, the EPA embarked on an aggressive program to limit the tremendous amount of waste that pours into the bay from overflowing municipal wastewater management systems, which are regulated under the Clean Water Act, and farms and animal feed operations, which are not.

The EPA stepped in to organize efforts by six bay states — Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware and New York, as well as the District — when they failed for years to lower pollution on their own.

Maryland and the District were eager for a cleanup, but other states were reluctant. Using its powers under the act, the EPA threatened to withhold permits that would have limited construction projects and allowable sewer releases if the states did not come up with individual pollution-reduction plans by a December 2010 deadline.

Within months of the agreement by the states and the federal government to tackle the problem, the farm bureau filed a suit in federal court in Harrisburg, Pa., in early 2011 to stop it. Groups such as the Fertilizer Institute, National Pork Producers Council and National Chicken Council joined the suit.

They said a “pollution diet” costing taxpayers and farmers billions by its full implementation in 2025, with upgrades to deteriorating sewer facilities and fences to limit chemical runoff from farms, is the sole responsibility of states. A judge dismissed their demand for an injunction in September and ruled that the agreement could move forward. The amicus brief was submitted in support of their appeal.

West Virginia was the only bay state to sign the amicus brief. Its Republican attorney general, Patrick Morrissey, took office last year. Democrat Darrell McGraw was in office at the time of the agreement.

Danville Register and Bee

Coal ash: It's still leaking

By DENICE THIBODEAU dthibodeau@registerbee.com (434) 791-7985 | Posted:
Wednesday, February 5, 2014 8:32 pm

Water treated by Danville Utilities still meets safety standards despite Sunday's coal ash spill at Duke Energy's Dan River Steam Station in Eden, N.C. — and the ongoing leak at the site.

Barry Dunkley, director of water and wastewater treatment for Danville Utilities, said turbidity — the amount of solids present in water samples — has decreased dramatically since Sunday, when levels in incoming water reached 400 NTU (nephelometric turbidity units), to less than 100 NTU Wednesday.

After going through the treatment process, most of those particles were gone, giving readings ranging from .07 NTU to .18 NTU, well within safety standards, according to the treatment plant's chemist, David Stiles.

On site, levels of turbidity, various bacterial analyses and other chemical analysis are done, while samples are sent to the state for other tests, such as for heavy metals generally found in coal ash, such as arsenic, mercury and selenium.

Getting test results from the state generally takes a couple of days, Stiles said, so on Wednesday samples were taken to two independent labs for analysis; results are expected Thursday.

As far away as Virginia Beach, there are concerns about the coal ash spill.

Dunkley said he has heard that the Dan River has turned ash gray as far as Buggs Island Lake. Thomas Leahy, director of public utilities for Virginia Beach, said that city's officials took the precautionary step of turning off the pumps at Lake Gaston until the full effect of the spill can be determined.

Leahy said normally the pumps would stay on, whether local reservoirs needed more water or not, simply to keep the water in the system fresh. But the reservoirs are full and likely to stay so this time of year.

"We don't really anticipate anything [from the spill] getting through Lake Gaston for a month," Leahy said. "And even then, it would probably be indistinguishable amounts."

Leahy said he checked the modeling they did while studying the possible affects of uranium mining on water supplies and determined the Duke Energy spill will probably equal only about 4 percent of the volume those models predicted.

"I'm not seeing significant issues for us [from the Duke Energy spill], but I don't know that for sure, so we have to check," Leahy said.

Leahy said they are working with the Roanoke River Service Authority to pull water samples at Kerr Reservoir and Lake Gaston to make sure no coal ash had reached the sites.

Duke Energy reports that progress is being made on unearthing the broken water pipe, but it is still not fixed.

Paige Sheehan, a spokesperson for Duke Energy, said Monday's efforts to stem the flow of coal ash laden water into the Dan River included using a plug — an balloon-like device inserted into the pipe and inflated — that popped out a few times and was reinserted.

The plug was removed deliberately Tuesday so a camera could be run down the pipe to identify where the break was. Not only did they find the break, they learned the pipe was not made of concrete as expected, but of corrugated metal.

On Wednesday, Sheehan said, crews worked at exposing the pipe and the broken area clogged up, forming a natural barrier for a while before it washed through.

Sheehan said there is still contaminated water flowing to the river, but "the flow has decreased significantly and there have been times of no flow."

A plan is being developed to permanently stop the leak, Sheehan said.

Danville Register and Bee

'It's like a lava flow moving slowly toward Danville'

BY JOHN R. CRANE jcrane@registerbee.com (434) 791-7987 | **Posted: Wednesday, February 5, 2014 8:41 pm**

About a dozen types of fish — and the creatures they depend on for food — live in the Dan River, where nearly 85,000 tons of coal ash spilled into the water from a broken pipe Sunday upriver in Eden, N.C.

Toxic substances from the coal ash concern Matt Wasson, program director Appalachian Voices, a non-profit environmental organization.

Selenium — a chemical found in pot ash — can cause reproductive failure in fish or kill them at high levels.

"We would not expect levels to be that high after this spill," Wasson said, referring to the leak that occurred at Duke Energy's Dan River Steam Station that closed in 2012.

However, Wasson does worry because selenium bio-magnifies once it enters the ecosystem. It enters macro-invertebrates — the insects and other creatures fish feed on — at a certain level and

increases as it moves up the food chain to the fish that eat them.

“It’s one of those compounds — like mercury [also found in coal ash] — that magnifies the higher up you go in the food chain,” Wasson said. “You get low levels in invertebrates, higher levels in fish.”

An incident involving Belews Creek Power Plant that dumped coal ash into Belews Lake in the 1970s wiped out 19 of 20 species of fish. Researchers from Wake Forest University concluded that selenium killed them off, Wasson said.

Another toxic by-product in coal ash — arsenic — gets into the sediment where important invertebrates live, Wasson said.

“There could be a lot of arsenic in the sediment that’s having a lot of profound ecological impact on the river,” Wasson said.

Rebecca Leprell, director of the Virginia Department of Health’s Division of Environmental Epidemiology, said there was already a fish consumption advisory for the Dan River separate from the coal ash spill, due to levels of mercury and PCBs.

The department recommends that residents avoid eating catfish longer than 32 inches and not to consume more than two fish meals of any other species per month, Leprell said.

Though there is no reason to believe short-term exposure to coal ash through fish consumption is a health concern, the VDH is still evaluating the situation, Leprell said. The department recommends avoiding eating fish from the Dan River until the evaluation is complete, Leprell said.

Macro-invertebrates that fish consume include the stonefly, mayfly, hellgrammite, crayfish, crane fly, dragonfly, water strider, snail, water penny, snipe fly, riffle beetle, damselfly and caddisfly, according to Tiffany Haworth, executive director of the Dan River Basin Association.

Haworth said it is impossible to determine the short-term and long-term impact the spill will have on the river’s ecosystem.

“It will obviously have an impact, and remediation needs to begin as soon as possible,” Haworth said.

The DRBA is working with other organizations to assess the impact and keep the public informed of safety information, impact updates and mitigation efforts.

“As more information becomes available, DRBA will collaborate with appropriate partners to help repair and restore the river’s ecosystem,” Haworth said.

Wasson, calling the incident “a massive disaster,” said six inches of coal ash covered the bottom of the river Tuesday about two miles downstream from the spill site.

“It’s like a lava flow moving slowly toward Danville on the bottom of the river,” Wasson said.

Selenium toxicity could be a concern for humans for months or years as a result of the spill, Wasson said. Arsenic could reduce the number of fish available in the Dan River for years, harming the food chain on which they depend for food.

“It’s fair to say possible impacts of this on fish populations could extend for years,” he said.

The state health department recommends that recreational users of the Dan River exercise caution when fishing, kayaking or engaging in other activities, Leprell said. Direct contact with coal ash can cause skin irritation and it’s best to wash it off with soap and water, Leprell said.

John Aulbach, director of the Virginia Department of Health’s Office of Drinking Water, said the water treated by the Danville Utilities Water Treatment Plant is safe to drink.

“Danville Utilities has done a great job taking care of this,” Aulbach said.

The office is monitoring the plant’s operations and following up to make sure it is performing well, Aulbach said. The Office of Drinking Water has seen and analyzed the results of test sampling from Duke Energy and they are “very acceptable,” he said.

Aulbach said he expects to look at additional samples collected by the city Thursday.

Richmond Times-Dispatch

That little green building in Bryan Park is a government monitor

Small building will monitor pollution at I-64, I-95 intersection

BY REX SPRINGSTON Richmond Times-Dispatch

A strange-looking little building in North Richmond’s Bryan Park is an aid to government surveillance.

In this case, the government wants to know not what you are doing but what you are breathing. It’s a good thing.

The green building, about the size of a backyard shed and sitting behind a chain-link fence, is an

air-quality monitor — the only one of its kind in the state.

It contains sophisticated equipment that checks for potentially dangerous pollutants such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide that spew from vehicle tailpipes.

The state Department of Environmental Quality installed the \$125,000 monitor in October at the behest of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The device is called a “near-road” monitor, and it’s part of an effort by the DEQ and the EPA to get a better idea of how much pollution lurks along busy highways, said DEQ spokesman Bill Hayden.

The Bryan Park site, in the southeast corner of the park and just north of Bellevue Avenue, was chosen because it’s near the heavily traveled interchange of interstates 95 and 64, Hayden said. People in southbound cars on I-95 can see the monitor on the right as they approach I-64.

“This currently is the only near-road monitor in the state, but DEQ expects to add monitors in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads later this year,” Hayden said.

So far, the Bryan Park monitor has not detected pollution at levels expected to cause health problems, Hayden said.

“It should put people’s minds at ease because it’s showing the standards are being met,” he said. “There is not a pollution problem in that area.”

The monitor plus installation cost about \$125,000, which was paid by a federal grant. Operating costs, about \$30,000 a year, are paid by state and federal dollars.

Philadelphia Inquirer

Peco: Over 420,000 still without power

Tens of thousands residents still in the dark in the Philadelphia area and the utility crews working to restore their power are facing another cold day with the temperature not expected to rise above freezing today.

The latest figures from Peco show that electricity has been restored to 30 percent of the 623,000 customers who lost power in Tuesday's ice storm.

The numbers, however, go up and down because crews need to turn off power to some customers to make necessary repairs. The latest figure, for example, is an increase from the last number reported here, but the overall trend is downward.

Fred Maher, a Peco spokesman, said the majority of customers should have power restored by Friday night, but other will have to wait through the weekend.

The Red Cross of Southeastern Pennsylvania said 183 people sought shelter at five locations in the suburbs and more are expected as the outages drag on.

The three Red Cross shelters in hardest-hit Chester County will consolidate into one located at West Chester University's field house today. It is set up for 400 people but has the space for up to 1,500 if needed, according to a Red Cross spokesman.

Schools throughout the affected suburbs are closed today, though some have scheduled late openings.

Peco bolstered its force of 3,000 employees and contractors with an additional 500 utility workers under mutual aid agreements Wednesday night. The utility expects to receive 1,000 more workers in the next two days. Some are being supplied by Commonwealth Edison, a Chicago utility owned by Peco's parent, Exelon Corp.

The storm was the second-worst in Peco's history in terms of power loss, exceeded only by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, which knocked out 850,000 customers.

Officials say it is hard for them to quantify how many trees and large limbs came down in the five-county area during the storm and afterward. Amtrak on Wednesday had said it was dealing with dozens of fallen trees on the line between Philadelphia and Harrisburg, which will remain out of operation all day today.

Here's the latest of what you need to know:

UTILITIES

As of 9 a.m., Peco figures showed 430,025 customers were without power in Southeastern Pennsylvania, an increase of nearly 9,500 from the last number reported here. The breakdown is 108,992 in Bucks County (decrease); 131,080 in Chester County (increase); 48,118 in Delaware County (increase); 131,272 in Montgomery County (increase) and 10,563 in Philadelphia (increase).

MASS TRANSIT

SEPTA: Service remains suspended on the Paoli/Thorndale and Cynwyd lines due to Amtrak power problems. Passengers on Trenton, Chestnut Hill East, Chestnut Hill West and Fox Chase Lines may experience delays of up to 15 minutes due to Amtrak overhead wire problems. Twenty-two bus lines are operating with detours. www.septa.org

AMTRAK: There is no service between Philadelphia and Harrisburg. www.amtrak.com

PATCO: No problems reported. www.ridepatco.org

NJ Transit: No problems reported. www.njtransit.com

DRIVING

Highways are clear. Some secondaries and side streets are laquered with black ice especially in the Philadelphia suburbs. A number of roads also are still blocked by downed trees or wire. Newtown Township police, for example, report six such closures. Pot holes are becoming a major problem.

GOVERNMENT

Montgomery County government offices and courts are closed.

Chester County and Bucks County government offices and courts are opening two hours late.

Philadelphia government offices and courts are on a normal schedule.

AIRPORT

Operations are normal at Philadelphia International Airport.

University of Delaware

Delaware Sea Grant promotes interest in marine science among high schoolers

Feb. 5, 2014--Budding marine scientists demonstrated an ocean of knowledge at the annual Chesapeake Bay Bowl in Lewes, Del., on Feb. 1, vying for a spot at the national competition in Seattle this spring.

Held at the University of Delaware's Hugh R. Sharp Campus, the regional quiz bowl brought together 60 top science students from 12 high schools in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. Students answered questions spanning oceanography, geology, biology, geography, social science, marine policy and chemistry.

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Va., took first place after an intense day of tackling multiple choice, short answer and written questions in rapid

response.

“We’ve always come really close,” said Comfort Sampong about her school’s performance in recent years, celebrating this year’s win with teammates Christopher Chen, Jared Nirenberg, John Christopher Panagides and Rachel Zoll. “It feels good to finally be on top.”

Squaring off against State College (Pa.) Area High School in the final round, the competitors were expected to know details about seafloor sediments, maritime law, tidal dynamics, fish migration and other topics that would have challenged many adults — especially on the clock.

The teams spent hours preparing for the bowl, with most having already taken biology, chemistry and marine science.

“It’s neat to watch them work together outside the classroom,” said Bill Geppert, who coached a team from Cape Henlopen High School in Lewes.

All participants were given the opportunity to look behind-the-scenes at the University of Delaware’s Lewes campus, which houses world-class marine science facilities. Students toured the research vessel *Hugh R. Sharp*, oil spill recovery vessel *DELRIVER* and Cannon Laboratory. Teams that did not advance to the final competition rounds were invited to a special presentation by UD scientists about a recent [Norwegian excursion](#) to study Arctic marine life.

The competitors hold promise for one day conducting such research themselves. Thomas Jefferson coach Lisa Wu said a number of her students who previously competed have gone on to graduate school in the field of marine science.

In the meantime, Wu’s team will head to Seattle in May to compete in the [National Ocean Sciences Bowl](#) finals at the University of Washington. The national competition is sponsored by the Consortium for Ocean Leadership to encourage student interest in pursuing a college degree and future career in the ocean sciences.

Chesapeake Bay Bowl top four finishers:

1st place: Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Vienna, Va.

2nd place: State College Area High School, State College, Pa.

3rd place: Woodrow Wilson High School, Washington, D.C.

4th place: Montgomery Blair High School, Silver Spring, Md.

The following schools also competed:

Archmere Academy, Claymont, Del.

Cape Henlopen High School, Lewes, Del.

Newark Charter High School, Newark, Del.

Liberty High School, Eldersburg, Md.

Lower Dauphin High School, Hummelstown, Pa.

Potomac Falls High School, Potomac Falls, Va.

Governor's School at Innovation Park (A), Manassas, Va.

Governor's School at Innovation Park (B), Manassas, Va.

Chesapeake Bay Bowl sponsors

Chesapeake Bay Bowl sponsors included Delaware Sea Grant, the University of Delaware College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment, National Aquarium, Consortium for Ocean Leadership, George Mason University, Mid-Atlantic Marine Education Association, Chincoteague Bay Field Station, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Under the Sea, Kevin Fleming Photography, Be the Bay, Maryland Sea Grant, L Town Surf and Earth Company and National Marine Educators Association. The event was supported by dozens of volunteers from around the region.

"The teams were amazing and the excitement really did build as we moved into the afternoon semi-finals and finals," said [Nancy Targett](#), director of Delaware Sea Grant and dean of UD's [College of Earth, Ocean and Environment](#). "What a great day for these students!"

Part of Delaware Sea Grant's mission is to increase environmental literacy and ocean awareness in elementary through high school students. Next year's Chesapeake Bay Bowl will take place at George Mason University.

"The students and volunteers work very hard in preparing for this single day. I'm excited to see how well it all came together and how much fun everyone had in the name of ocean science," said event organizer [Chris Petrone](#), marine education specialist with Delaware Sea Grant.

About Delaware Sea Grant

The University of Delaware was designated as the nation's ninth Sea Grant College in 1976 to promote the wise use, conservation and management of marine and coastal resources through high-quality research, education and outreach activities that benefit the public and the environment. UD's [College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment](#) administers the program, which conducts research in priority areas ranging from seafood safety to coastal hazards.

Article by Teresa Messmore

BNA Daily Environment Report

EPA Considering Methods to Assess Economywide Costs of Air Regulations

By Jessica Coomes

Feb. 5 — The Environmental Protection Agency is soliciting public input on how to assess the economywide costs and benefits of air pollution regulations (79 Fed. Reg. 6899).

The agency has posed a series of questions about the merits and limitations of economywide modeling, and a panel of advisers, which hasn't yet been formed, will consider the charge questions and advise the agency.

The EPA posted the draft questions online Feb. 5 and will accept comment on them through April 7.

The EPA said it typically bases its cost-benefit analyses on sector-based models and said economywide models pose “serious technical challenges.”

The agency said such models may be appropriate to evaluate a rule that is implemented over years and affects multiple sectors of the economy.

Among the charge questions was the question of how a rule's implementation time horizon and the number of regulated sectors would affect an economywide model.

Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) called the EPA's action “a significant first step in the process to implement whole-economy modeling methods at EPA that would ultimately offer a true picture of the full economic impact of rules on businesses, workers, and families.” In a Feb. 5 news release, Vitter said the EPA's existing economic analyses focus on benefits and ignore costs.

Bob Perciasepe, then-acting EPA administrator, formally asked the Science Advisory Board to convene an expert panel on economic modeling in a July memo (236 DEN A-6, 12/9/13).

Also in July, House Republicans, including Reps. Fred Upton (R-Mich.) and Ed Whitfield (R-Ky.), faulted the agency for limiting its estimates for costs of rules to sector-specific modeling, despite the capacity to use economywide estimates.

In a [letter](#) to Perciasepe, the lawmakers said the agency failed to fully consider the economywide effects of its regulations and underestimated regulatory effects on jobs.

Social Costs, Benefits

The EPA's Feb. 5 questions acknowledged that “[p]olicy makers and the public also have a keen interest in the distribution of social costs and benefits across households and sectors (i.e., economic impacts) through mechanisms such as energy prices or labor market impacts.”

The EPA will accept comments on the charge questions at <http://www.regulations.gov> in Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OA-2014-0129.

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BNA Daily Environment Report

Northeast Democrats Urge EPA to Provide Flexibility in Power Plant Rules

By [Dean Scott](#)

Feb. 5 — House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and 40 other House Democrats are touting a regional effort to cap greenhouse gas emissions from power plants as a model for limiting carbon dioxide emissions from existing plants nationwide.

In a Jan. 31 [letter](#), the lawmakers pressed the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that its carbon dioxide limits for existing power plants, which are to be finalized before the end of the Obama administration, provide flexibility for states that have already limited emissions.

In the Northeast, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative—an emissions trading program covering Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont—is projected to cut power plant carbon dioxide emissions in the region in half by 2020 from 2005 levels.

In their letter to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, the 41 House Democrats led by Reps. Annie Kuster (N.H.) and Niki Tsongas (Mass.) said the RGGI approach used in nine states should be used “as a benchmark for what is possible on a national level” and to ensure the EPA provides “equitable treatment for states that have been leading the way on this issue.”

The EPA is on track to issue final requirements setting limits on greenhouse gas emissions from new power plants in June. The agency also is developing regulatory guidelines for existing power plants, which are to be proposed in June and then finalized in 2015.

Efficiency, Adaptation

Beyond RGGI, other states such as California have moved on their own to establish cap-and-trade systems similar to the Northeastern states’ approach. RGGI was launched in 2005 using an emissions trading approach in which emitters must purchase allowances or permits for each ton of greenhouse gas they emit. California began auctioning allowances for its emissions trading system last year ([227 DEN A-17, 11/25/13](#)).

In their letter, the representatives wrote that the nine RGGI states have used a majority of the revenue collected from the allowance auctions to fund energy efficiency improvements, to defray the cost of consumer energy bills and to bolster efforts to plan for and adapt to climate impacts such as rising sea level.

While not mentioned in the letter, McCarthy has some experience with state efforts such as RGGI. The EPA chief was commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection under former Gov. Jodi Rell (R), who signed an agreement to participate in the regional accord in 2005.

Grist

Can we save Chesapeake Bay from chicken crap?

By [John Upton](#)

It sucks to be crapped on by a bird. So imagine being crapped on by hundreds of millions of them every year.

That’s the reality for Chesapeake Bay.

In the adjacent state of Maryland, more than [300 million chickens](#) in factory farms produce more than a billion and a half pounds of waste every year. Most of that waste is spread over farmland — ostensibly as a fertilizer, but that just happens to be the cheapest way of disposing of all that

crap. Now almost half the farms in the state are saturated with phosphorous from the manure; that phosphorus runs off the farms and into the estuary and bay, where it fertilizes algal blooms that threaten the seafood and tourism industries.

Last year, Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) backed away from proposed new regulations to deal with the problem, caving to pressure from the poultry industry. But now two state lawmakers have stepped up by introducing legislation that would compel poultry companies to pay to help protect and restore Chesapeake Bay.

"Poultry companies are polluting with impunity while the public pays for the cleanup," said one of the lawmakers, Shane Robinson, a Democrat.

The Poultry Fair Share Act would tax poultry companies five cents per bird, with revenue used to cover most of the \$20 million annual cost of a state program that helps farmers grow cover crops to reduce soil erosion and nutrient runoff.

According to Food & Water Watch, which has advocated for such legislation, Maryland residents pay \$110 million of taxes every year into a bay restoration fund. "Meanwhile, a company like Perdue enjoys annual chicken sales of \$4.8 billion and pays nothing into the fund despite the significant impacts the industry has on the health of the Bay," the nonprofit wrote on its website.

Poultry companies are making the ridiculous claim that the five-cent tax would utterly ruin their industry, which is a big employer in the state. "That bill, if passed, will guarantee that there won't be any poultry left in the state of Maryland," one of them told The Daily Times.

When the legislation was being floated in November, a Perdue spokesman dismissed the proposal as "part of an ongoing campaign by radical environmental groups against contemporary animal agriculture."

If contemporary animal agriculture means dumping shit-derived nutrients into treasured water bodies, ruining water quality and the industries that rely on it, then we'll take the old variety of agriculture, please.

- It's the Poultry Industry's Turn to Pay Their Fair Share, Food & Water Watch
- Maryland legislators propose five-cent chicken tax, The Daily Times

John Upton is a science fan and green news boffin who tweets, posts articles to Facebook, and blogs about ecology. He welcomes reader questions, tips, and incoherent rants: johnupton@gmail.com.
